

Portland Homicide Problem Analysis 2019-2021

Portland Police Bureau
California Partnership for Safe Communities

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Problem Analysis: Introduction and Overview

Introduction and Overview

- A “problem analysis” is a set of data collection and analysis exercises designed to support the implementation of violence reduction strategies, including Ceasefire. This methodology has been developed and refined over the last 20 years, and used in dozens of cities nationally.
- This analysis establishes a common understanding of the local violence problem that guides and informs the work of civic, community, and criminal justice leaders to reduce violence.
- The problem analysis identifies the groups and individuals within a community who are at greatest risk of violence and helps tailor an intervention to reduce that risk.
- Though the methodology is informed by research, the problem analysis is primarily a practice document with implications for local policy.

Introduction and Overview

- This analysis examined all homicides in the City of Portland from January 2019 – June 2021 ($n = 117$), and all nonfatal injury shootings between January 2019 – December 2021 ($n = 314$).
- The 117 homicides involved 214 unique victims or identified suspects, and the 314 shootings involved 462 unique identified victims or suspects. This analysis examines the characteristics of these incidents and the involved individuals, including demographics and criminal justice system involvement.
- The analysis also includes information on groups, gangs and networks at high risk of involvement in violence, including their size, relationships, turfs, and activities as well as the spatial concentration of violence throughout the city.

Social Networks Bring Risk

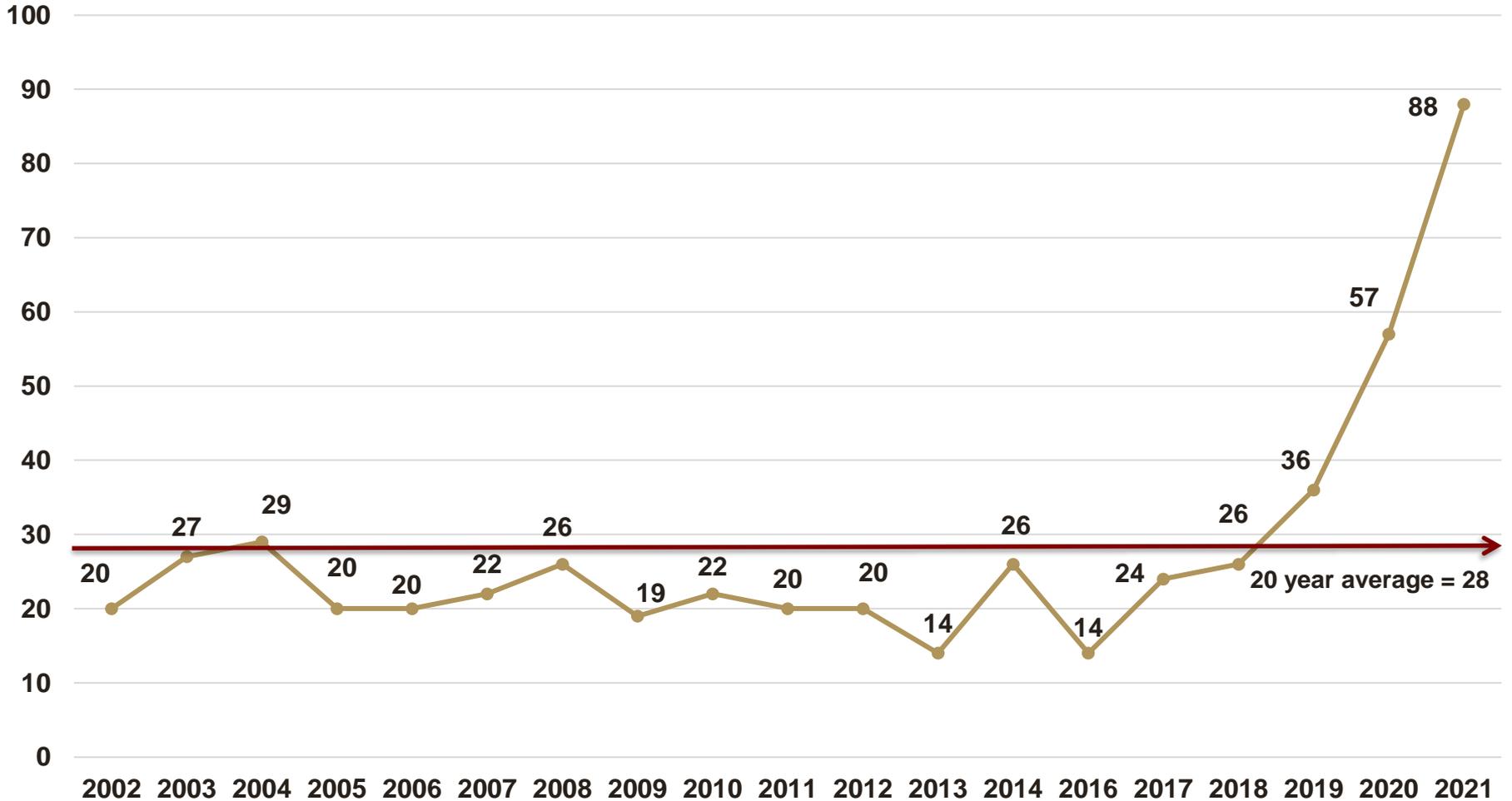
Research increasingly shows that the concentration of violence within social networks is a key factor in addressing gun violence.

- The risk of future gun shot victimization is highly influenced by the composition of an individuals' social network.
- The more someone is connected to individuals who are victims or perpetrators of shootings, the higher their risk.
- The average time to a retaliation shooting once someone is “infected” is about 125 days.

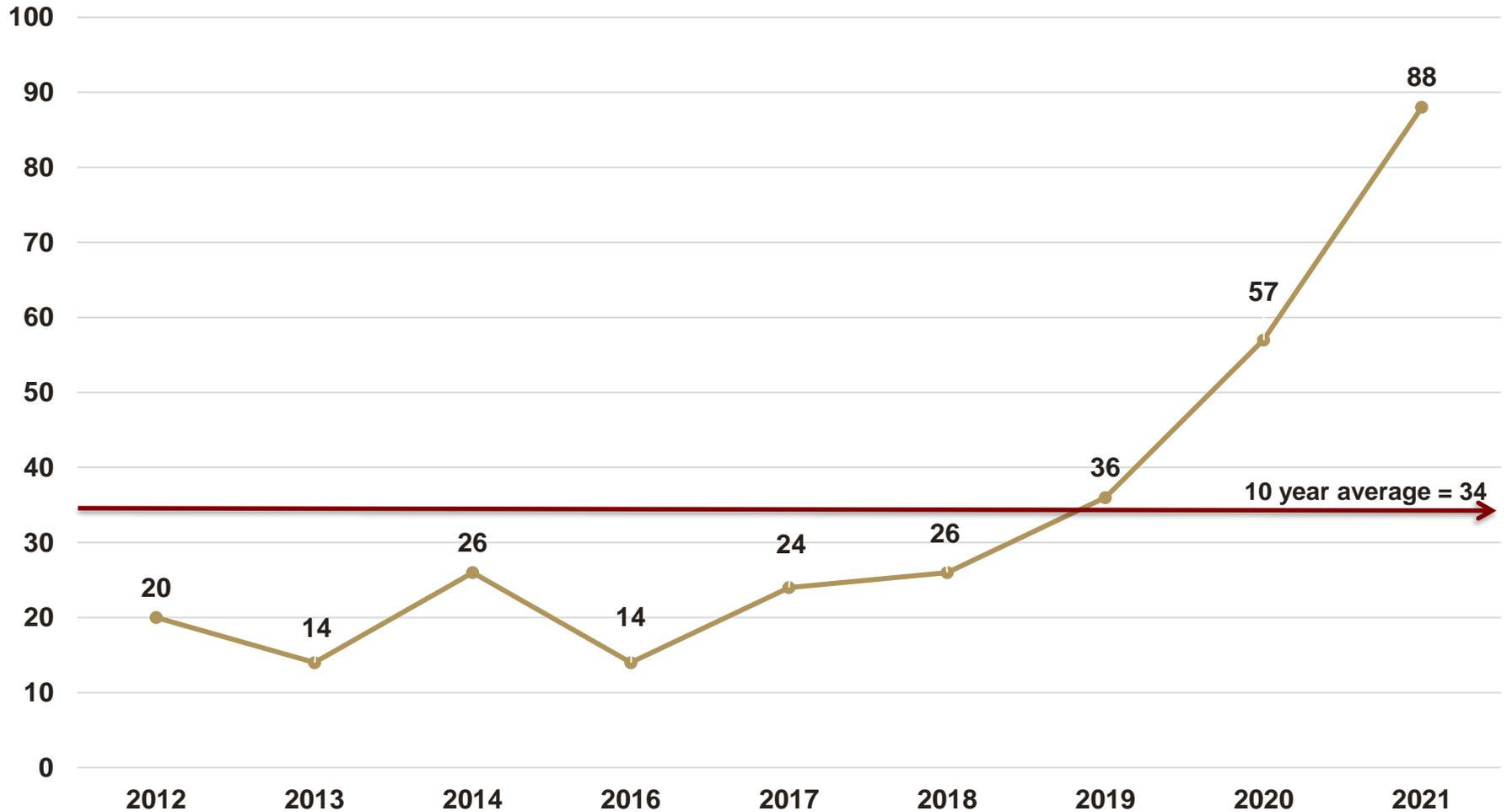
Consistent with the national research, we found that social networks are a key predictor of risk of being involved in gun violence in Portland.

Context and Trend Data

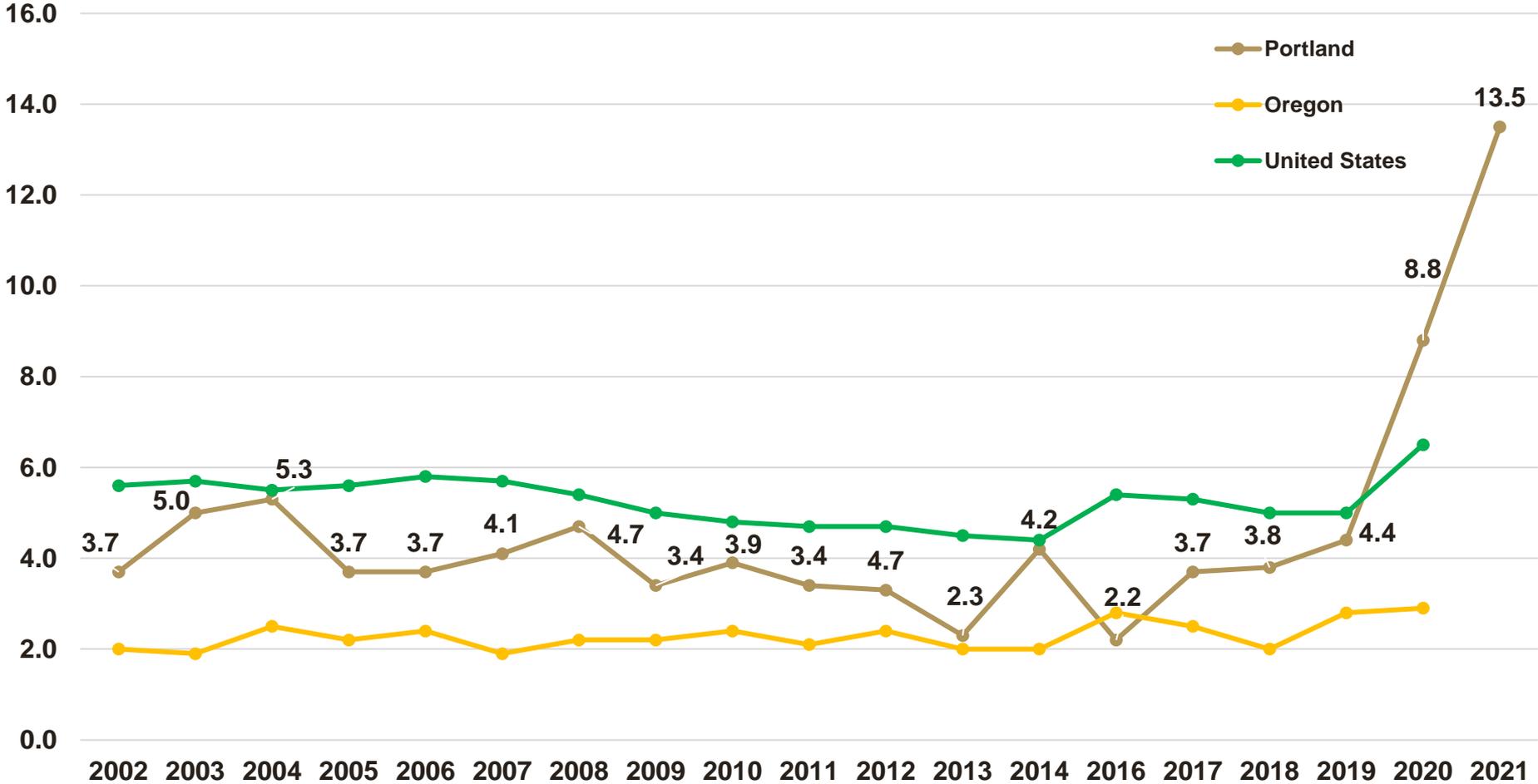
Portland Homicides: 2002 - 2021



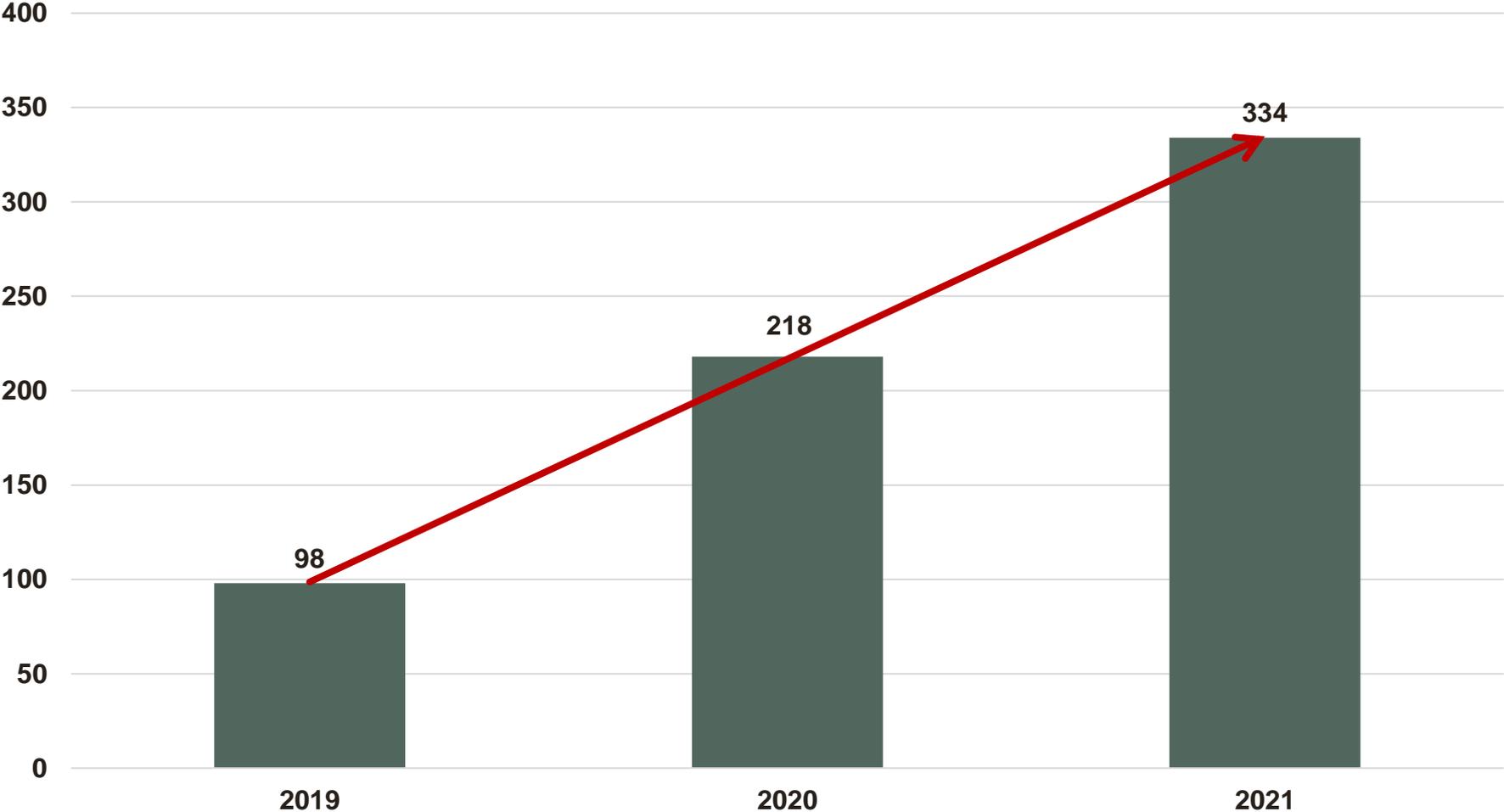
Portland Homicides: 2012 - 2021



Portland Homicide Rate (per 100,000 population): 2002 - 2021



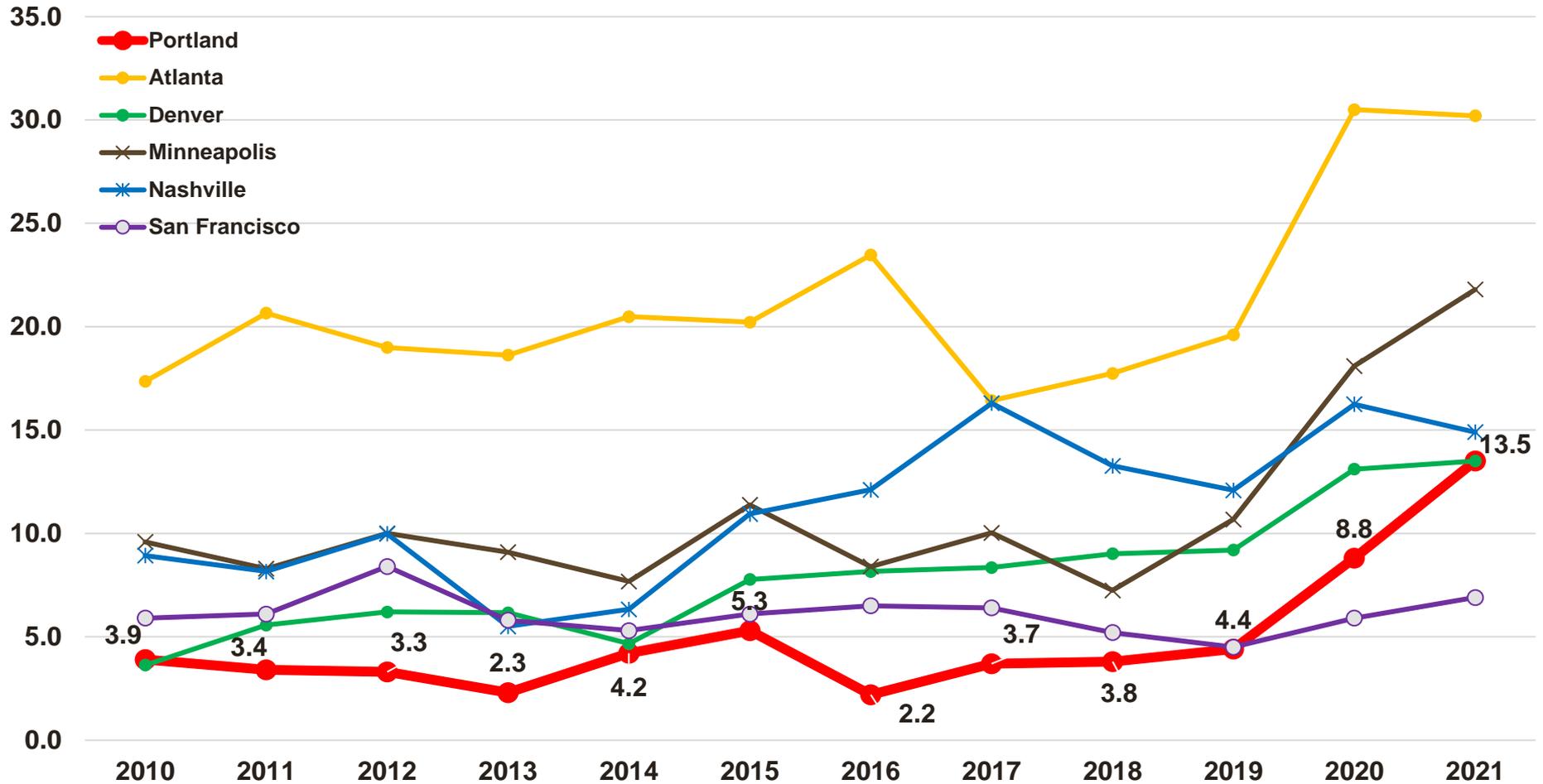
Portland Nonfatal Shootings: 2019 - 2021



Portland Homicide Rate (per 100,000 population): Peer Comparison Cities

	2019 Homicide Rate (per 100,000 pop.)	Population Density (per sq. mi)	Median Household Income	Unemployment Rate	Percent Below Poverty Line
Portland, OR	4.4	4,821	\$73,159	5%	13%
Atlanta, GA	13.9	3,732	\$64,179	7%	19%
Denver, CO	9.2	4,590	\$72,661	4%	12%
Minneapolis, MN	10.7	7,876	\$66,068	5%	18%
Nashville, TN	12.1	1,346	\$62,087	5%	14%
San Francisco, CA	4.5	17,345	\$119,136	5%	10%

Portland Homicide Rate (per 100,000 population): 2010 – 2020 with Peer Comparison Cities



Summary Observations:

- From 2019 – 2021, the City of Portland experienced a:
 - 144% increase in **counts** of homicide incidents
 - 241% increase in **counts** of nonfatal injury shootings
- Relative to five selected peer comparison cities,* Portland experienced the largest increase in homicide **rate** from 2019 – 2021:
 - Portland: 207% increase
 - Minneapolis: 104% increase
 - Atlanta: 54% increase
 - San Francisco: 53% increase
 - Denver: 47% increase
 - Nashville: 23% increase

*Minneapolis, Atlanta, Nashville, and Denver selected using the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago's Peer City Identification Tool. San Francisco selected based on comparable homicide rate trends

**Victims and Suspects of
Homicides and Shootings:
Demographics**

Victims and Suspects of Homicides & Shootings: Sex and Race

	Homicides		Nonfatal Shootings		All Victims and Suspects (n=676)	Portland Population
	Victims (n=126)	Suspects (n=88)	Victims (n=385)	Suspects (n=77)		
Sex						
Male	83.3%	90.9%	84.2%	94.8%	86.1%	49.6%
Female	16.7%	9.1%	15.8%	5.2%	13.9%	50.4%
Race						
Asian	3.2%	0.0%	2.4%	1.3%	2.1%	8.7%
African-American	38.9%	41.2%	49.2%	57.9%	47.2%	5.9%
Hispanic	7.9%	9.4%	12.3%	6.6%	10.5%	9.8%
Caucasian	46.0%	45.9%	32.5%	30.3%	36.5%	75.3%
Other	4.0%	3.5%	3.7%	3.9%	3.7%	

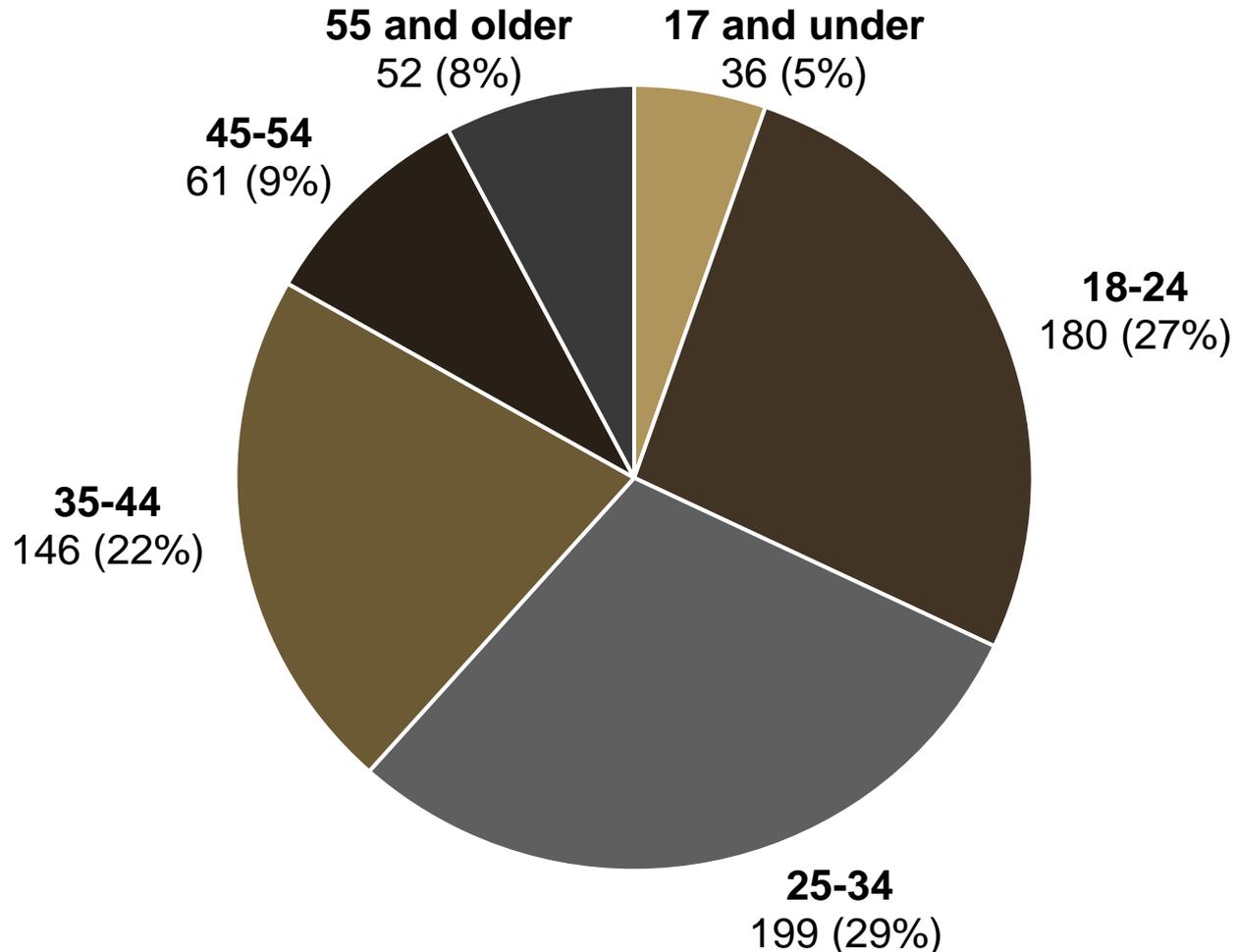
Victims and Suspects of Homicides & Shootings: Age

	Homicides		Nonfatal Shootings		All Victims and Suspects (n=676)
	Victims (n=126)	Suspects (n=88)	Victims (n=385)	Suspects (n=77)	
Age					
17 and under	3.2%	9.2%	4.7%	7.8%	5.3%
18-24	23.2%	31.0%	26.2%	29.9%	26.7%
25-34	26.4%	31.0%	28.6%	37.7%	29.5%
35-44	20.8%	12.6%	24.4%	19.5%	21.7%
45-54	13.6%	6.9%	9.4%	2.6%	9.1%
55 and older	12.8%	9.2%	6.8%	2.6%	7.7%
Mean Age	36.8	31.5	33.1	29.1	32.9

Age:

All Known Victims and Suspects ($n = 676$)

January 2019 – June 2021



Summary Observations: Characteristics of Those Involved in Violence

- Victims and suspects of homicides and shootings in Portland are primarily African-American (47.2%) and Caucasian (36.5%) men (86.1%).
- The overall average age of victims and suspects is 32.9, and about 78% are between the ages of 18-44.
- Victims tend to be slightly older than suspects, and those involved in homicides as victims or suspects are more likely to be white. Suspects are slightly more likely to be male when compared to victims.
- Relative to victims and suspects of homicides and shootings 2015-2019, there are no statistically significant differences in the race, sex, or age of victims and suspects 2019-2021.

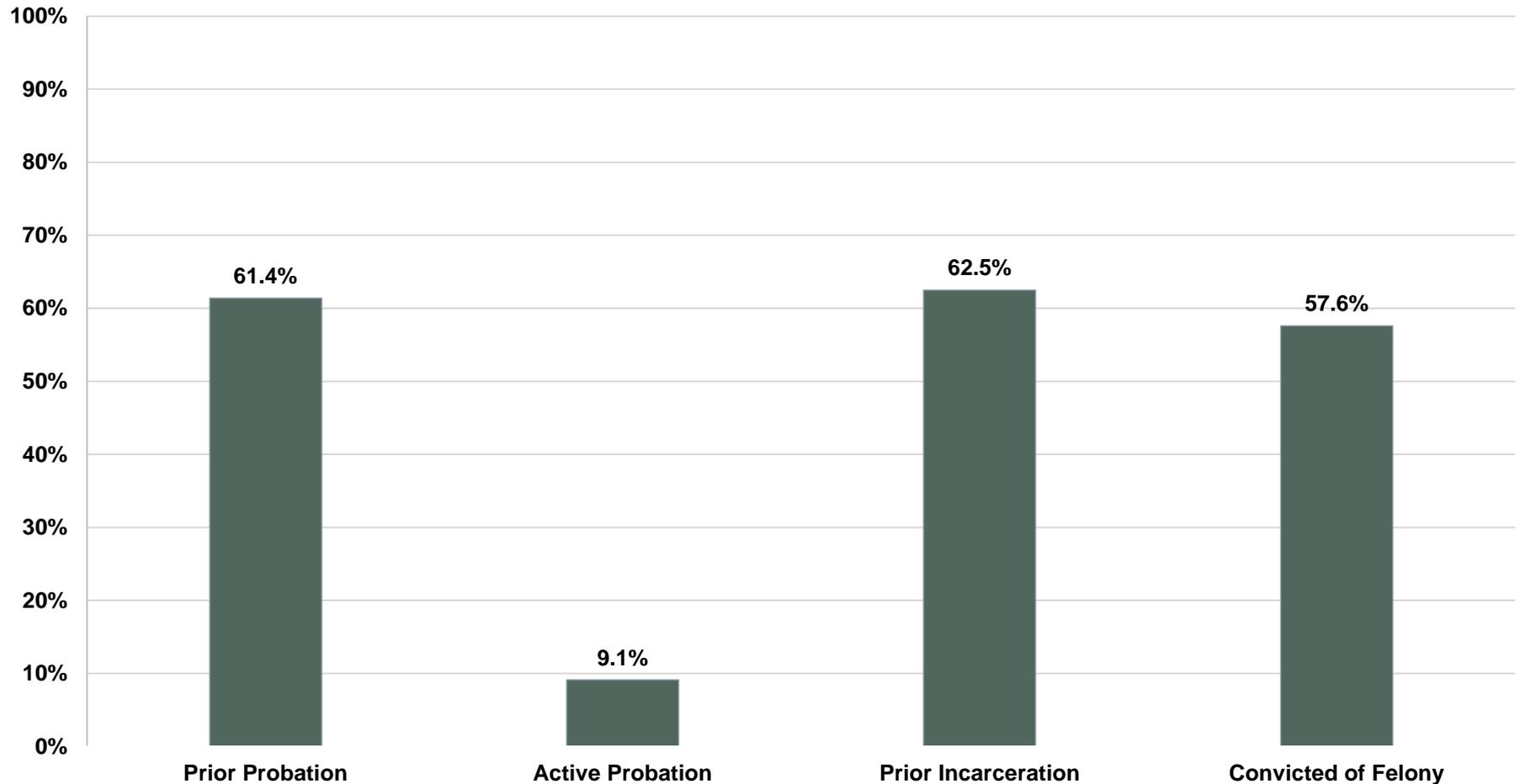
**Victims and Suspects of
Homicides and Shootings:
Criminal Justice System Involvement**

Victims and Suspects: Criminal Justice System Involvement

	Homicides		Nonfatal Shootings		All Victims and Suspects (n=676)
	Victims (n=126)	Suspects (n=88)	Victims (n=385)	Suspects (n=77)	
Known to the CJ system prior to the incident	51*	63 (71.6%)	267 (69.4%)	59 (76.6%)	440
Of those known to the CJ System:					
Average age	40.1	33.2	33.9	30.7	33.8
Average number of prior arrests	8.1	5.9	8.6	8.0	8.1
Average number of prior felony arrests	3.9	2.9	4.7	4.3	4.3
Prior probation/post-prison supervision	58.8%	54.0%	63.7%	60.3%	61.4%
Active probation/post-prison supervision	3.9%	9.5%	10.5%	10.3%	9.1%
Prior incarceration	45.1%	58.7%	65.5%	65.5%	62.5%
Convicted of felony	43.1%	57.1%	58.1%	67.2%	57.9%

*Prior criminal involvement was inconsistently available due to limitations in statewide access to criminal histories for homicide victims.

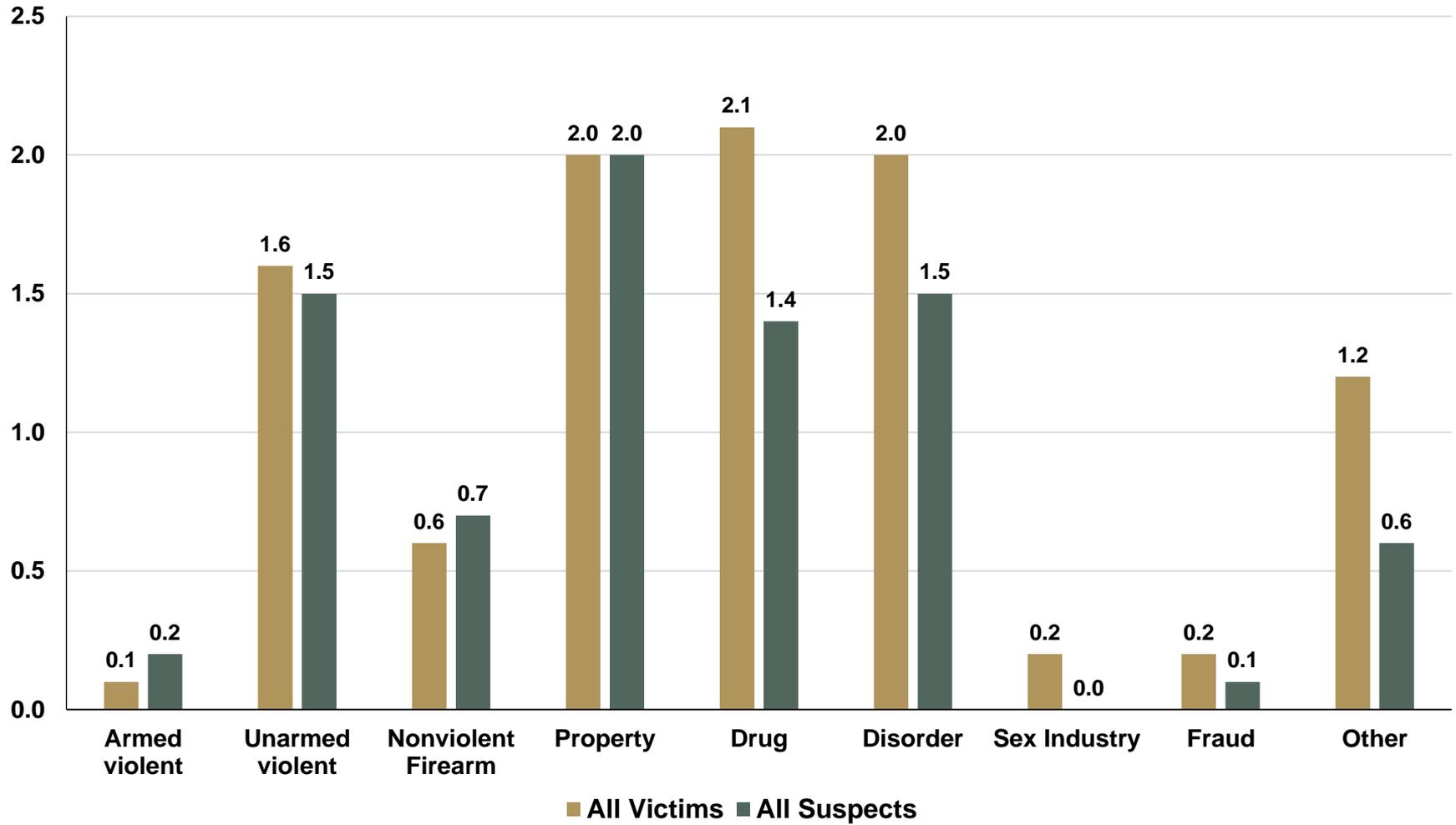
Victims and Suspects of Homicides & Shootings: Criminal Justice System Involvement



Victims and Suspects: Criminal Histories – Average Prior Offenses

	Homicides		Nonfatal Shootings		All Victims and Suspects
	Victims	Suspects	Victims	Suspects	
Of those known to the CJ System:	(51)	(63)	(267)	(59)	
Armed violent offenses	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Unarmed violent offenses	1.0	1.4	1.8	1.6	1.6
Nonviolent firearm offenses	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.7
Property offenses	1.8	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.0
Drug offenses	2.4	1.0	2.1	1.7	1.9
Disorder offenses	1.9	1.3	2.0	1.4	1.9
Sex industry offenses	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Fraud offenses	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
Other offenses	1.0	0.5	1.2	0.8	1.1
Total	9.2	6.8	10.4	9.2	9.6

Victims and Suspects of Homicides & Shootings: Criminal Histories – Average Prior Offenses



Summary Observations:

Criminal Justice System Involvement of Victims and Suspects of Homicides & Shootings

- About 70% of victims and suspects had prior criminal justice system involvement.
- Just over 61% of victims and suspects had prior probation or post-prison supervision and about 9% were on active probation or post-prison supervision.
- About 58% of victims and suspects had a prior felony conviction.

Summary Observations:

Criminal Justice System Involvement of Victims and Suspects of Homicides & Shootings

- On average, homicide victims had been arrested 8.1 times for 9.2 different criminal offenses and shooting victims has been arrested 8.6 times for 10.4 different criminal offenses prior to the incident.
- Homicide suspects had been arrested an average of 5.9 times for 6.8 different criminal offenses and shooting suspects had been arrested 8.0 times for 9.2 different criminal offenses prior to the incident.
- Most prior arrests were for property, drug, disorder, and unarmed violent offenses, respectively.

Summary Observations:

Criminal Justice System Involvement of Victims and Suspects of Homicides & Shootings

- Victims and suspects from 2019-2021 were significantly more likely to have been on prior probation/post-prison supervision (61%) when compared to victims and suspects from 2015-2019.
- Victims and suspects 2019-2021 were significantly less likely to have been on active probation/post-prison supervision (9%) at the time of the incident when compared to victims and suspects from 2015-2019 (18%).
 - However, this difference may emerge from data limitations wherein we could not collect victim/suspect supervision status from detectives in unreviewed cases.
- Overall, victims and suspects 2019-2021 had similar arrest histories and criminal justice system involvement to victims and suspects 2015-2019.

Incident Analysis & Group Involvement

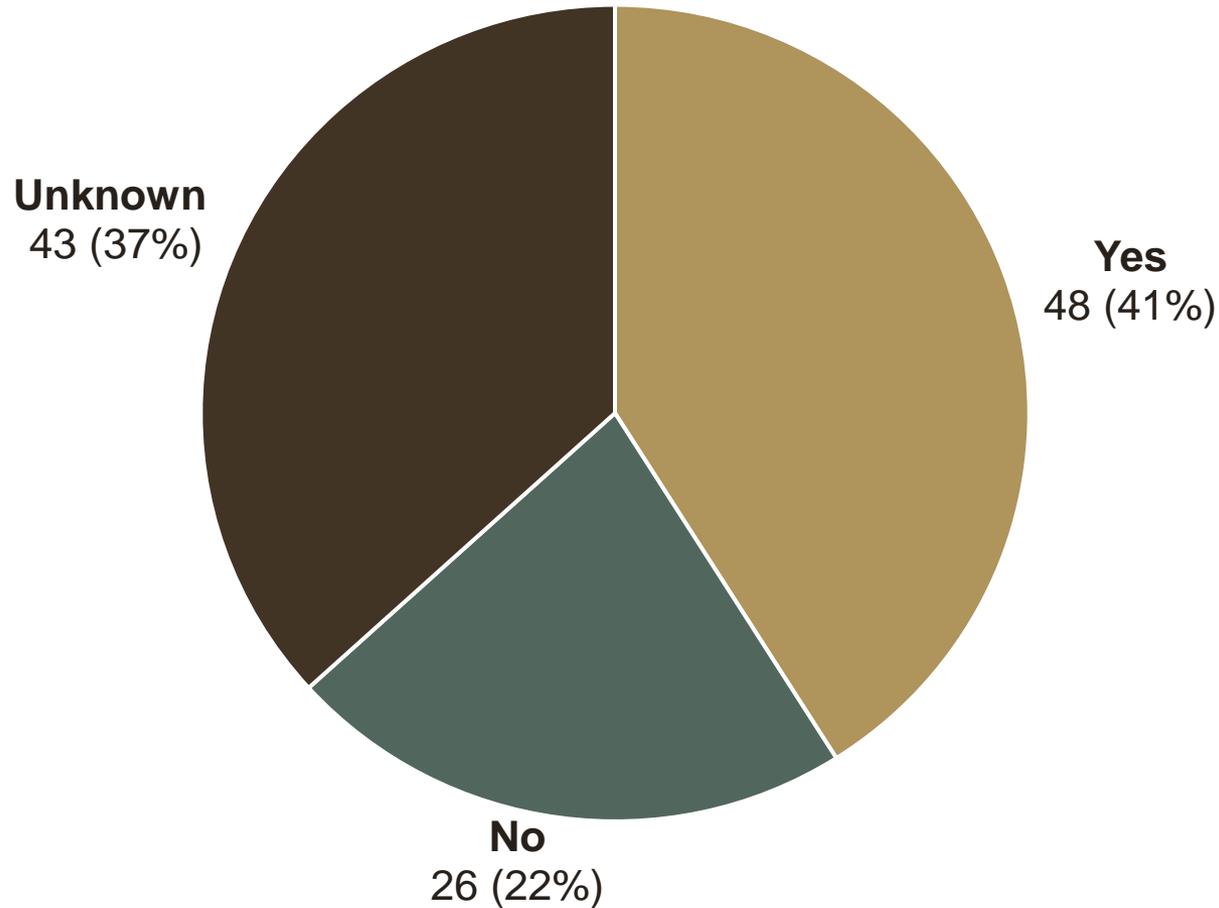
Data Note:

- The City of Portland experienced a rapid increase in fatal and nonfatal shootings beginning in the summer of 2020 amidst a decrease in PPB staffing and resources. PPB personnel resources were also necessarily reallocated to respond to ongoing protest activity.
- Due to these staffing and resource constraints, data on shooting incidents and investigative activity throughout 2020-2021 is limited.
- The PPB faces continued resource limitations and sustained increases in gun violence that have restricted their ability to pull and review detailed reports that would have been necessary for a thorough evaluation of all gun violence incidents for this project.

Data Note:

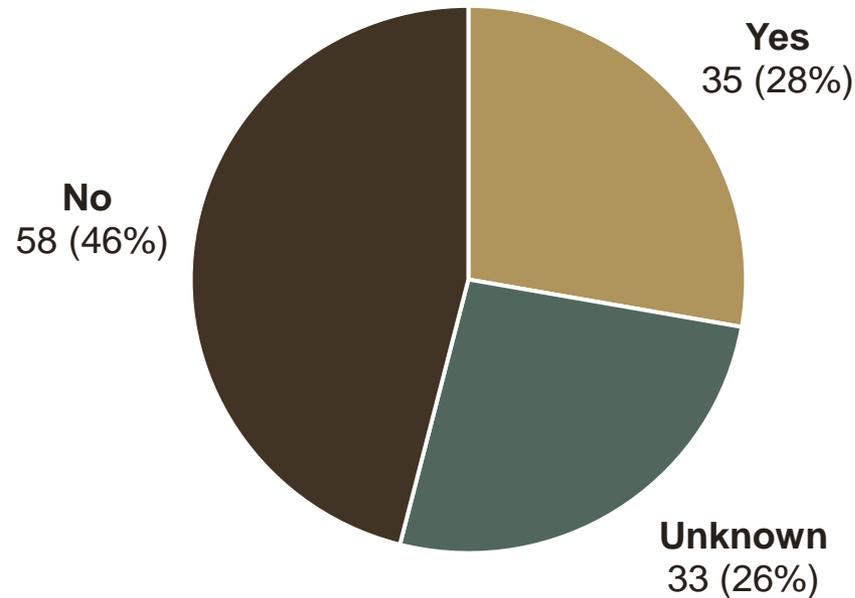
- The PPB accommodated our research team however they could, but this data is limited in that the motives for many homicides and shootings remain unknown.
- Beyond incident motives, former/current members of the GVRT/ECST dedicated time to review cases and share their knowledge about group/gang associations.
- While it is difficult to draw conclusions about incident motives in this dataset, we are confident that this data is accurate in reflecting group and gang involvement in homicides and nonfatal shootings.

Group Member Involved Homicides

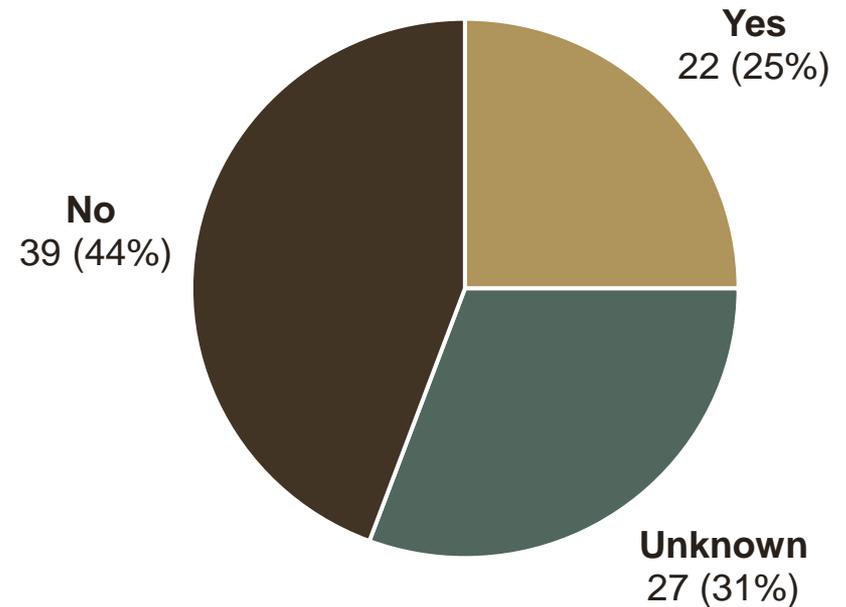


Group-Involved Victims & Suspects: Homicides

Victims (*n*=126)



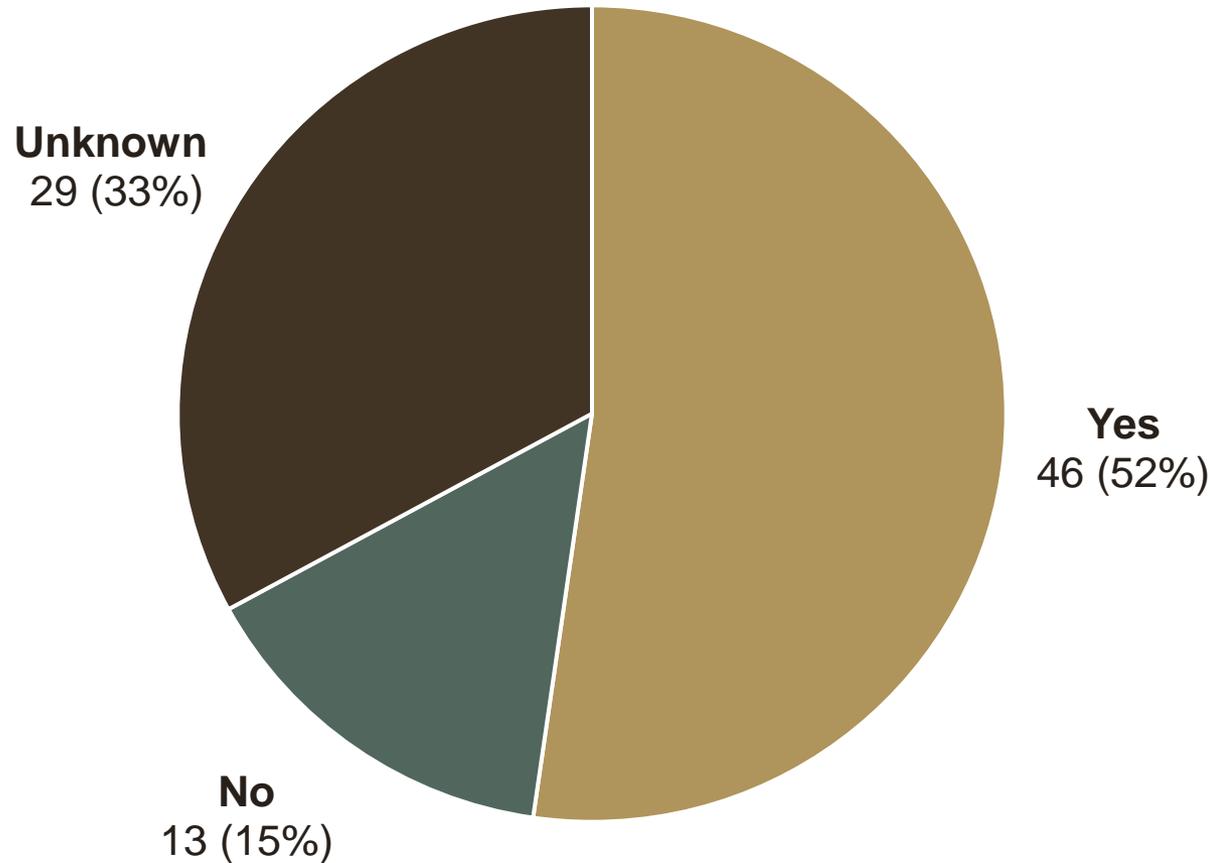
Suspects (*n*=88)



Homicide Cause of Death

	Total (n=117)		Group-Involved (n=48)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gunshot	88	75.2%	46	52.3%
Stabbing	13	11.1%	1	7.7%
Blunt trauma	7	6.0%	0	-
Strangulation	3	2.6%	0	-
Other	3	2.6%	1	33.3%
Unknown	3	2.6%	0	-

Group Member Involvement: Gun Homicides ($n = 88$)

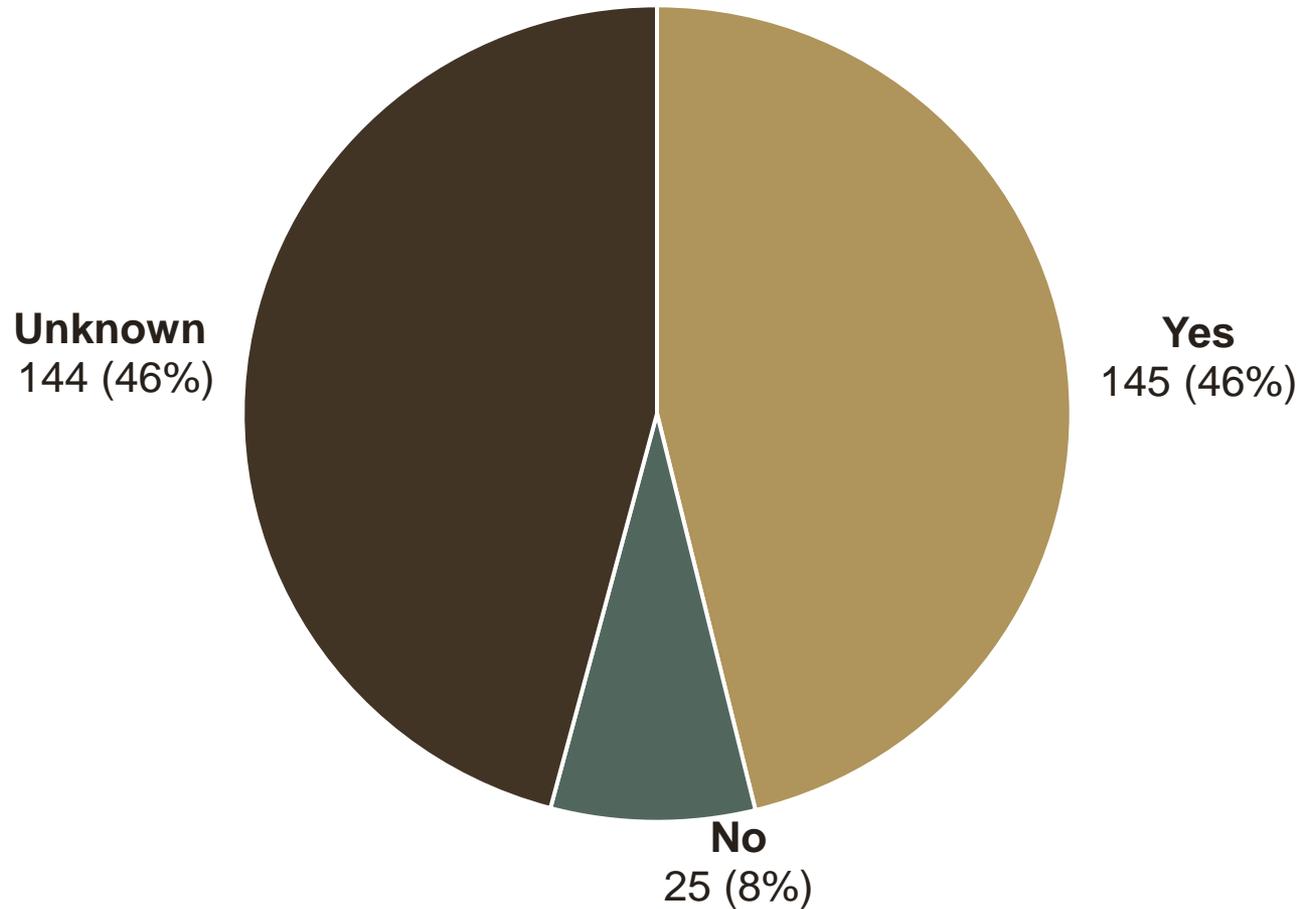


Homicide Circumstances and Group Involvement

	Total (n=117)		% Group Member Involved	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Instant dispute	16	13.7%	7	43.8%
Personal dispute	15	12.8%	6	40.0%
Group-related dispute	8	6.8%	8	100%
Domestic dispute	6	5.1%	2	33.3%
Robbery/Carjacking	4	3.4%	2	50.0%
Burglary/Larceny	2	1.7%	0	-
Mental illness	2	1.7%	0	-
Drug robbery/drug dispute	2	1.7%	1	50.0%
Other	4	3.4%	1	25.0%
Unknown	18	15.4%	9	50.0%
Case Not Reviewed*	40	34.2%	12	30.0%

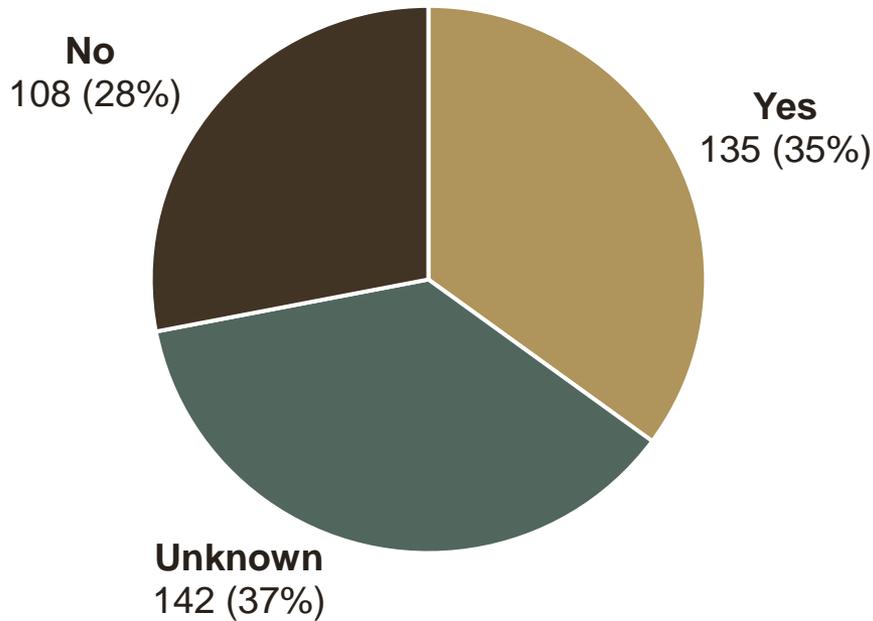
*A large number of cases were investigated by detectives who had retired by the time this analysis was conducted. A lack of resources and personnel in Portland prevented us from being able to review these incidents.

Group Member Involved Nonfatal Shootings

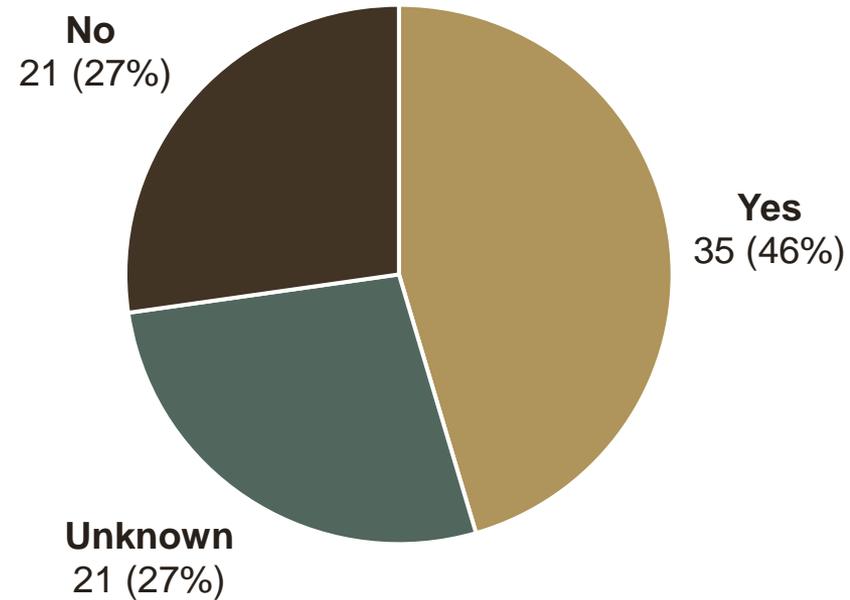


Group-Involved Victims & Suspects: Nonfatal Shootings

Victims (*n*=385)



Suspects (*n*=77)



Shooting Circumstances and Group Involvement

	Total (n=314)		% Group Member Involved	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Personal dispute	44	14.0%	24	54.5%
Instant dispute	36	11.5%	14	38.9%
Group-related dispute	28	8.9%	28	100%
Robbery/Carjacking	9	2.9%	1	11.1%
Drug robbery/drug dispute	9	2.9%	3	33.3%
Domestic dispute	6	1.9%	4	66.7%
Burglary/Larceny	1	0.3%	0	-
Other	8	2.5%	1	12.5%
Unknown	101	32.2%	42	41.6%
Case Not Reviewed*	72	22.9%	28	38.9%

*A large number of cases were not assigned to assault detectives for follow-up due to a lack of solvability factors and resources. Limited resources and personnel in Portland prevented us from being able to pull reports and review these incidents.

Summary Observations:

Incident Analysis & Group Involvement

- Homicides from 2019-2021 were significantly more likely to be gun homicides (75%) when compared to homicides 2015-2019 (60%).
- Just under half of all homicides in Portland from January 2019 – June 2021 involved group or gang members as either victims or suspects or both **(41-78%)**.
- More than half of the 88 gun homicides in Portland from January 2019 – June 2021 involved group or gang members as either victims or suspects or both **(52-85%)**.
- We use the term “group-involved” because it:
 - captures the full variety of gangs, sets and crews characteristic of Oregon cities; and
 - includes not just group-on-group conflicts but also incidents in which someone’s association with a group increases their risk of violence.

Summary Observations:

Incident Analysis & Group Involvement

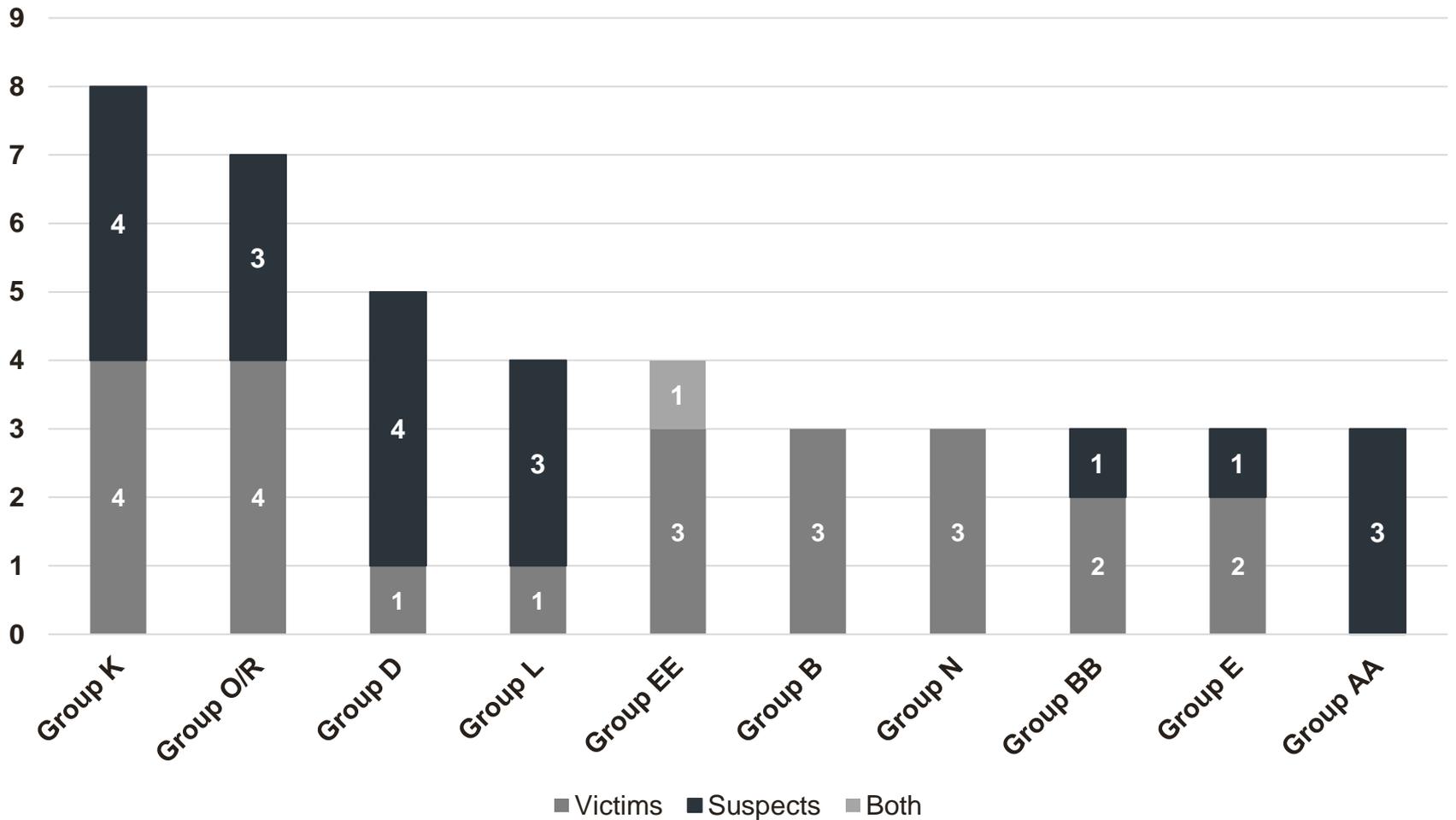
- Homicides in Portland fall into many categories of circumstances, but the largest are ongoing personal disputes and instant disputes.
- This is closely followed by violence resulting from group/gang members engaged in ongoing group-related conflicts.
- Group and gang members are also involved in a significant share of other crimes that result in homicides, such as other types of drug robberies and drug-related disputes.
- Overall, 0.1% of Portland's population was involved in a homicide or shooting from 2019-2021.
- However, approximately 18.2% of the estimated population of group/gang-involved individuals in Portland was involved in a homicide or shooting from 2019-2021.
- Over the study period there were approximately 227 group involved individuals **directly** involved in a homicide or a shooting, indicating **that a very small and very high risk population is driving a significant portion of the gun violence in Portland.**

High Risk Groups and Networks

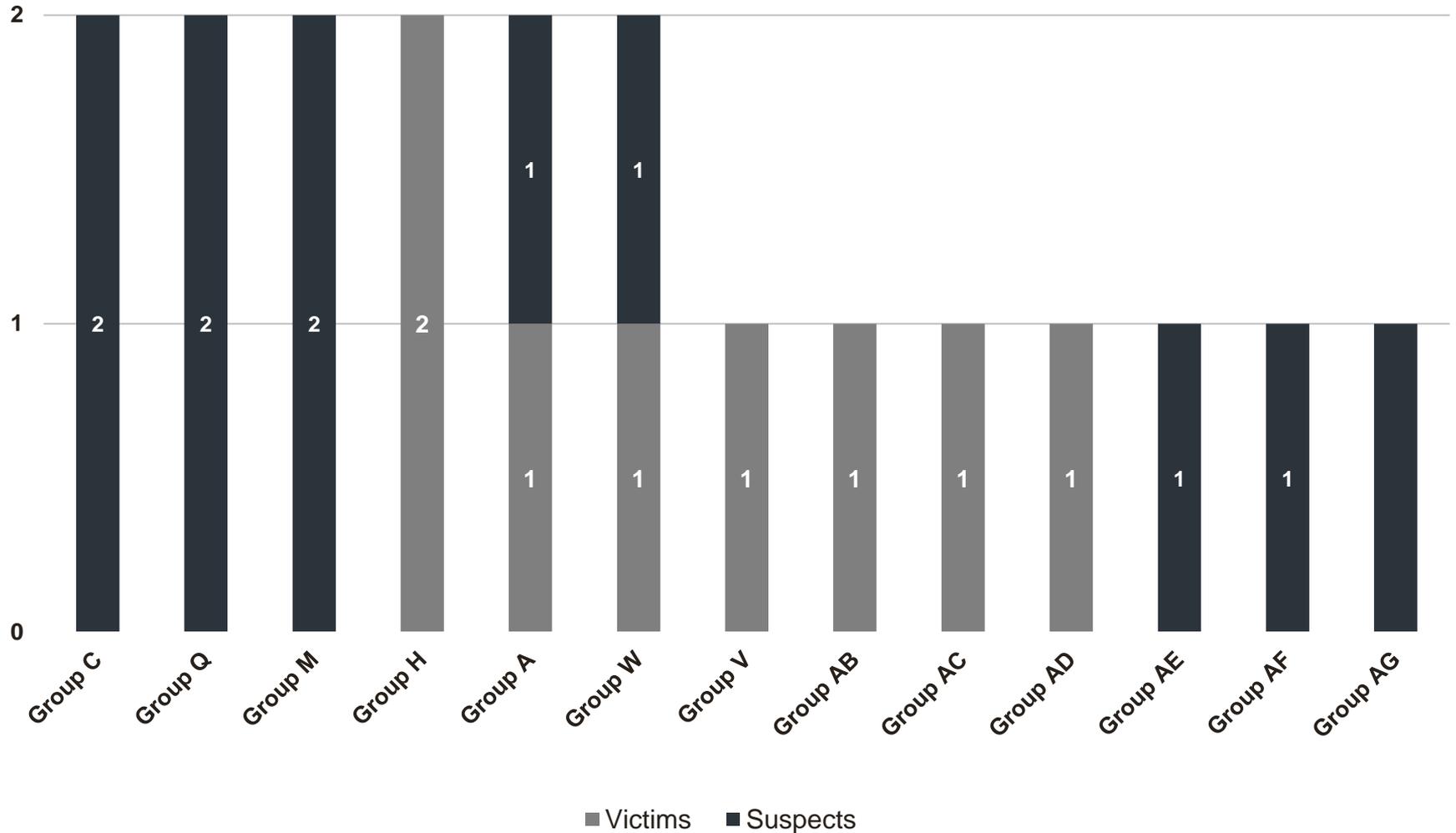
Summary Observations: Groups, Gangs, and Networks at High Risk of Violence

- The Portland Police Bureau identified 30 groups and gangs currently active and at significant risk of involvement in violence as of 2021.
- These groups and gangs have an estimated currently active membership of 1000-1495 members (0.16-0.23% of Portland's population).
- These groups tend to be primarily African-American, though there are also several Hispanic groups and White groups.
- Of these 30 groups, 10 Portland groups were associated with the greatest amount of homicide cases (43) from January 2019 – June 2021. These 10 groups have an estimated currently active membership of 570-815 members.
- Homicides and shootings associated with these groups are driven by ongoing group conflicts but also by members using violence to resolve personal conflicts.

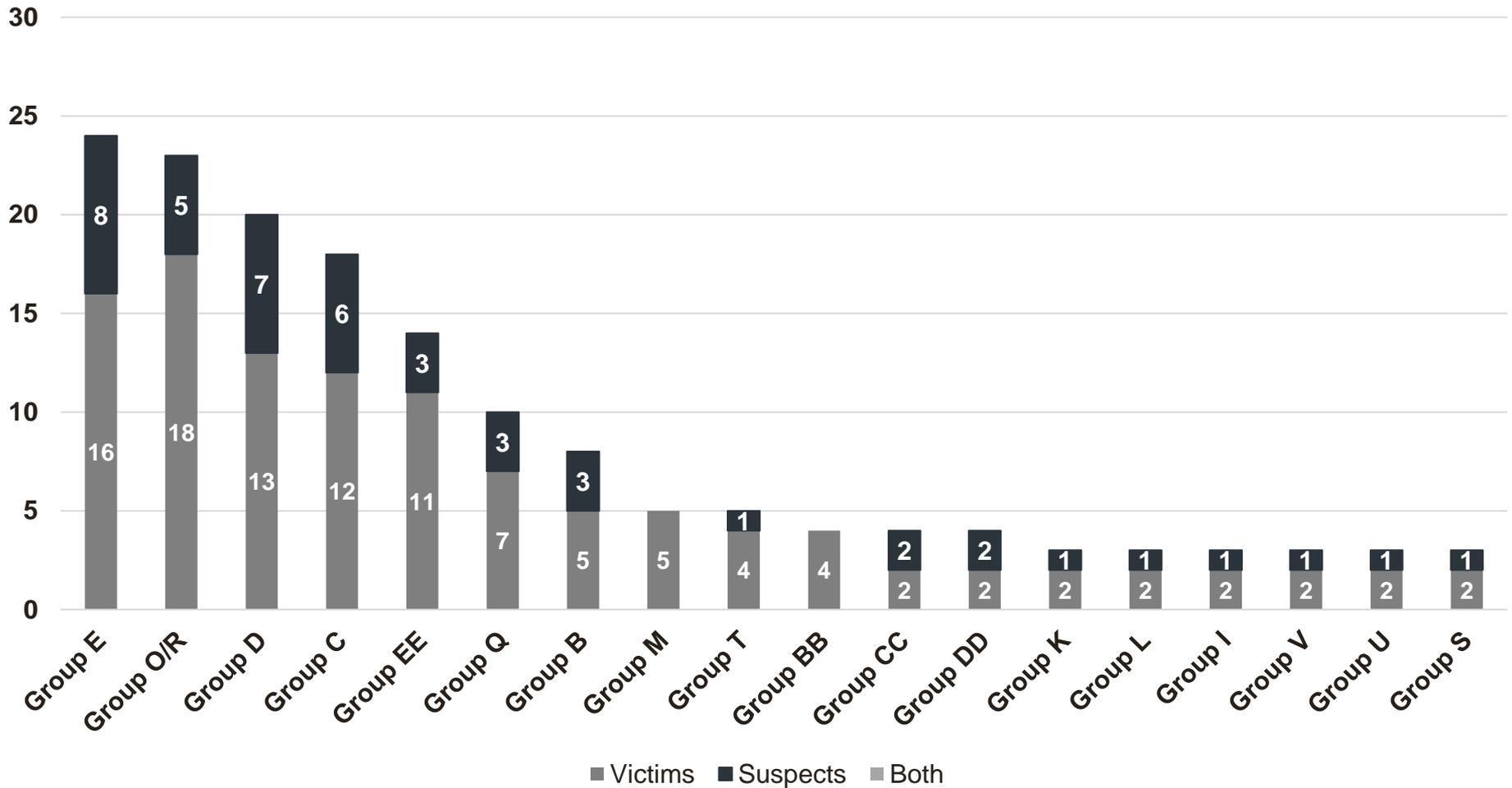
Groups Involved in Three or More Homicides



Groups Involved in Two or Fewer Homicides

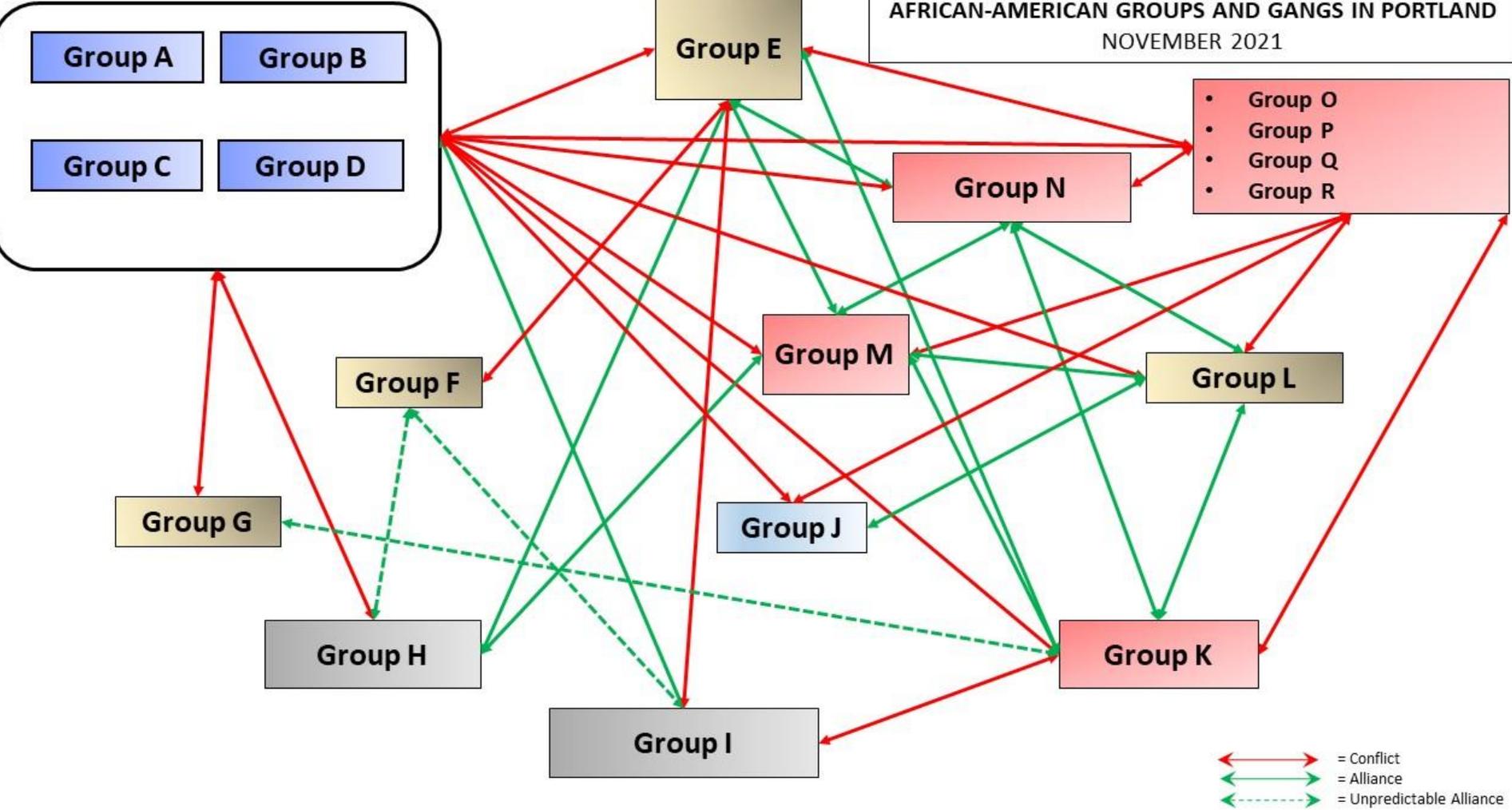


Groups Involved in Three or More Nonfatal Shootings



Group Conflicts and Alliances

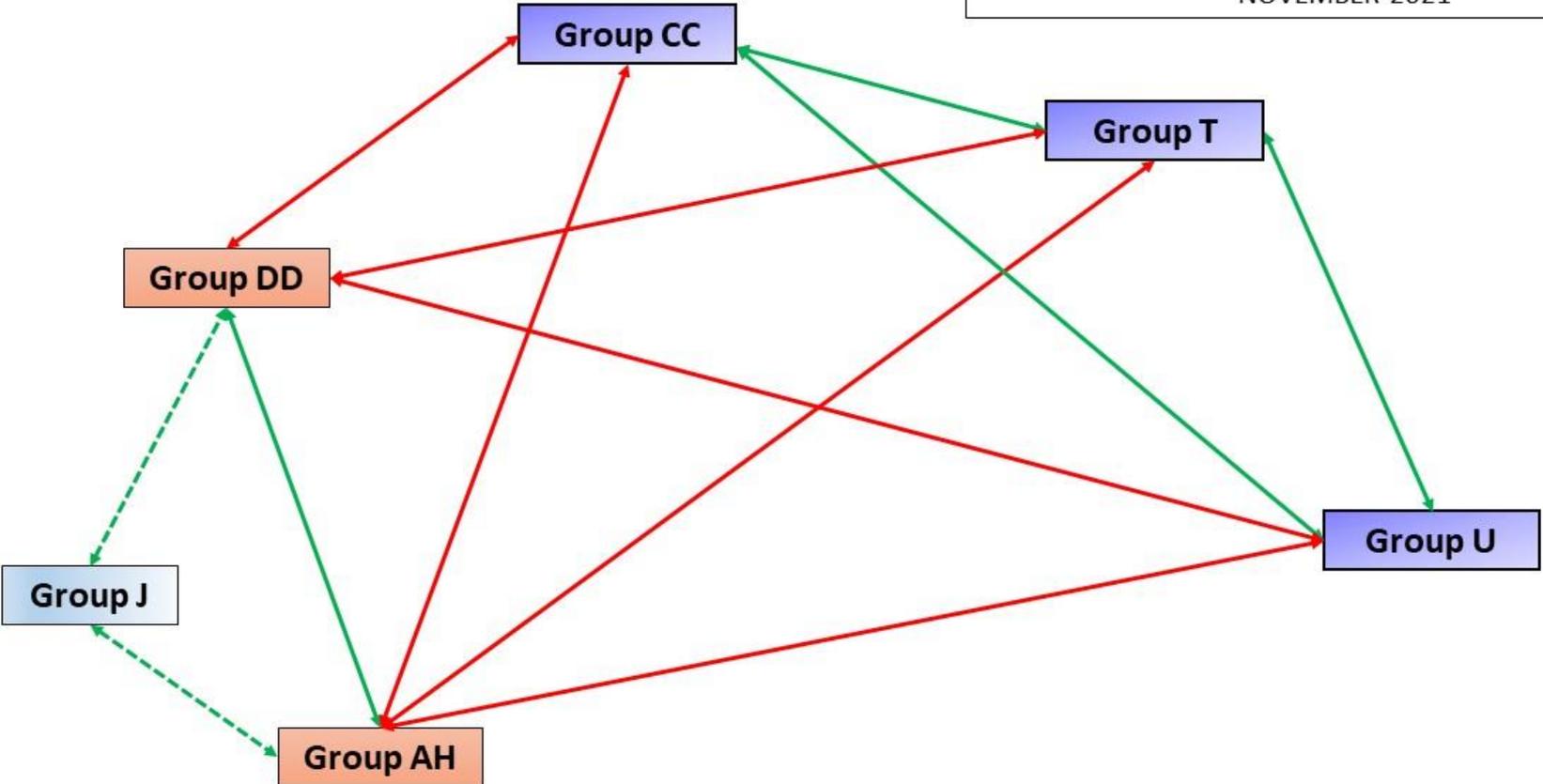
AFRICAN-AMERICAN GROUPS AND GANGS IN PORTLAND
NOVEMBER 2021



= Conflict
 = Alliance
 = Unpredictable Alliance

Group Conflicts and Alliances

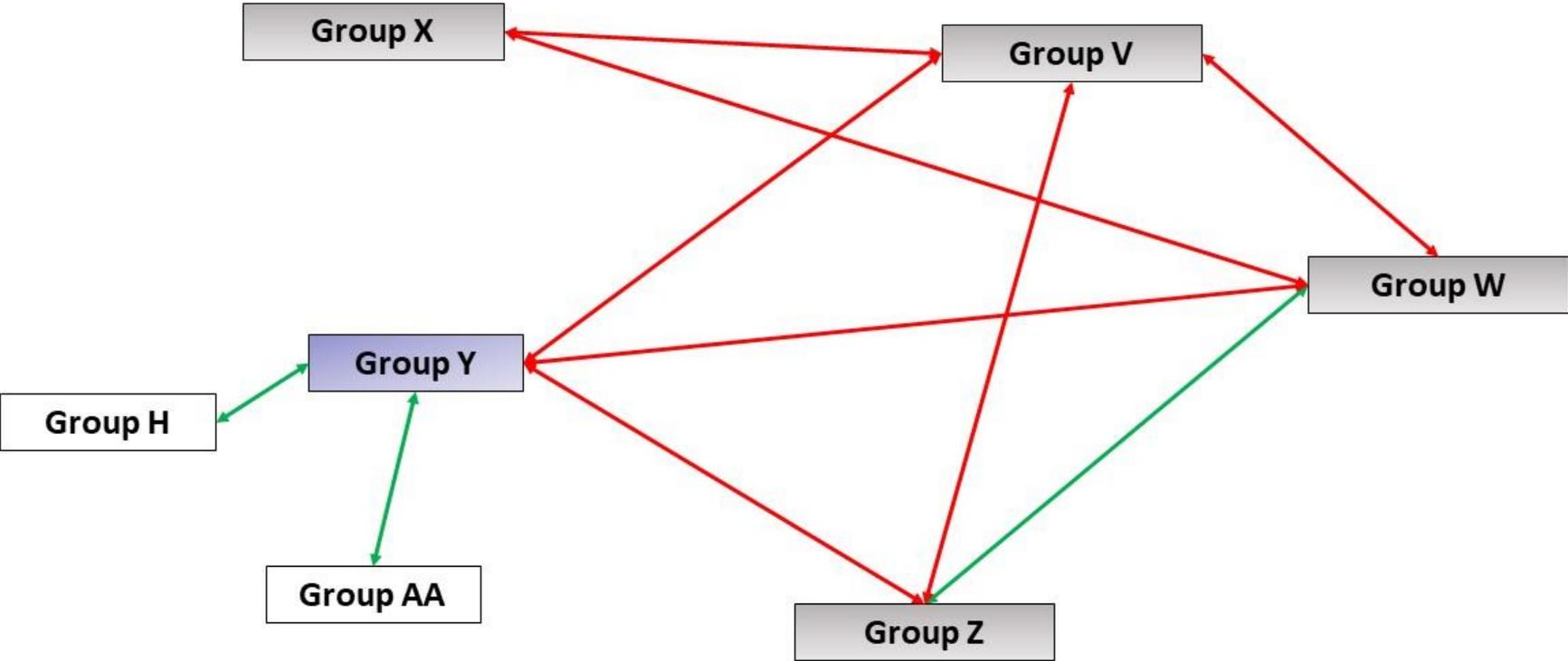
HISPANIC GROUPS AND GANGS IN PORTLAND
NOVEMBER 2021



↔ = Conflict
→ = Alliance
- - - = Unpredictable Alliance

Group Conflicts and Alliances

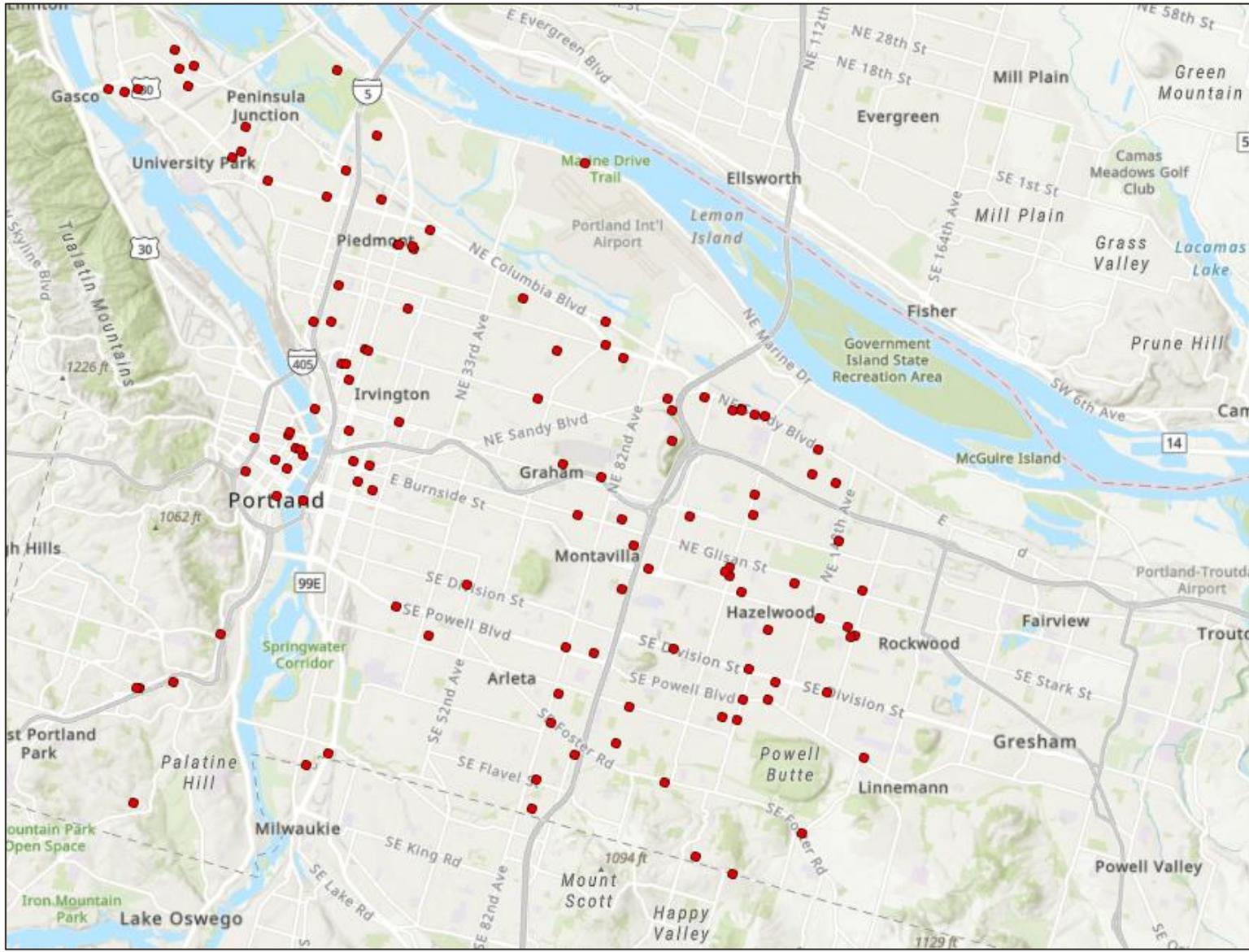
CAUCASIAN GROUPS AND GANGS IN PORTLAND
NOVEMBER 2021



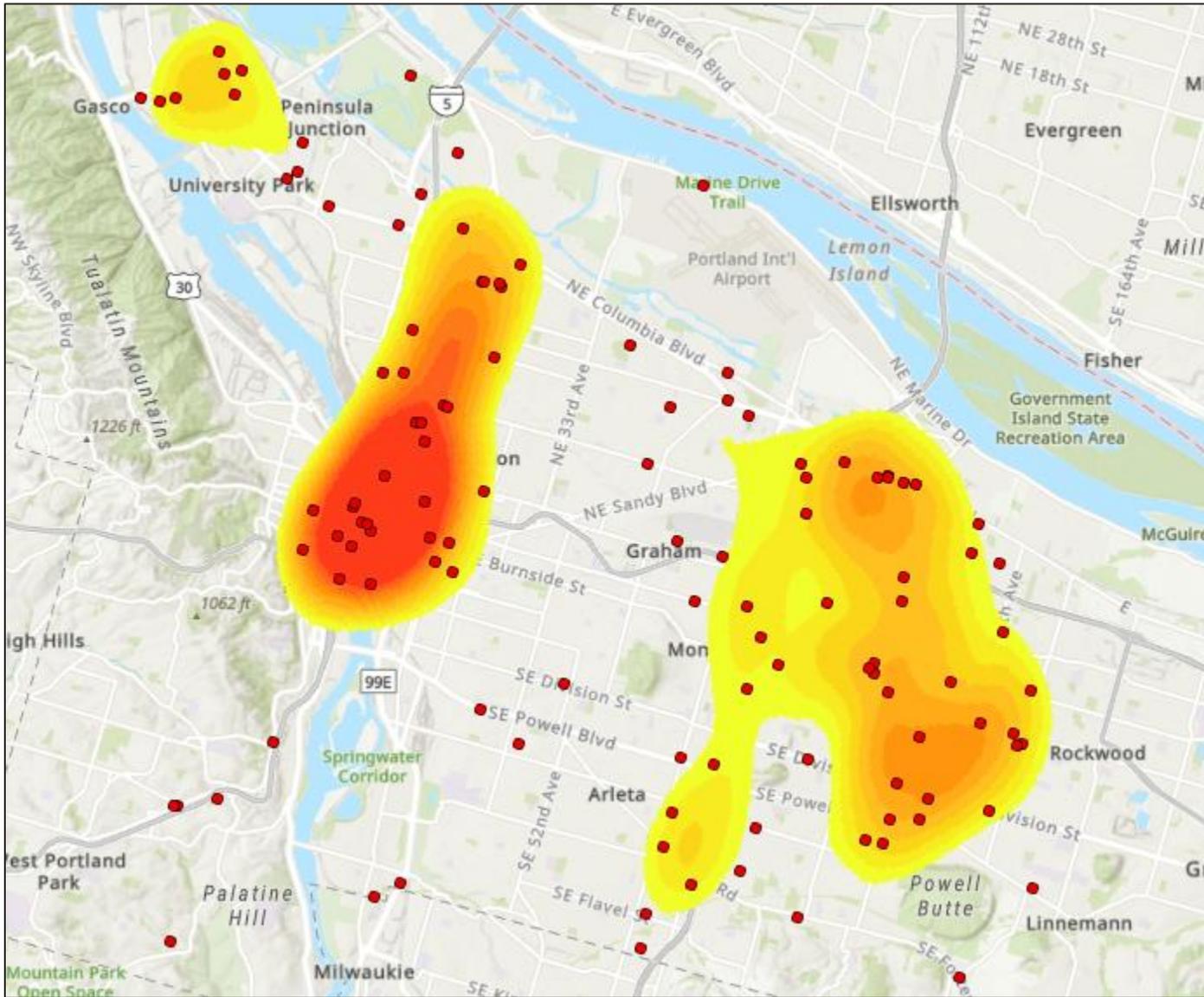
↔ = Conflict
↔ = Alliance
↔ = Unpredictable Alliance

Violent Crime Density

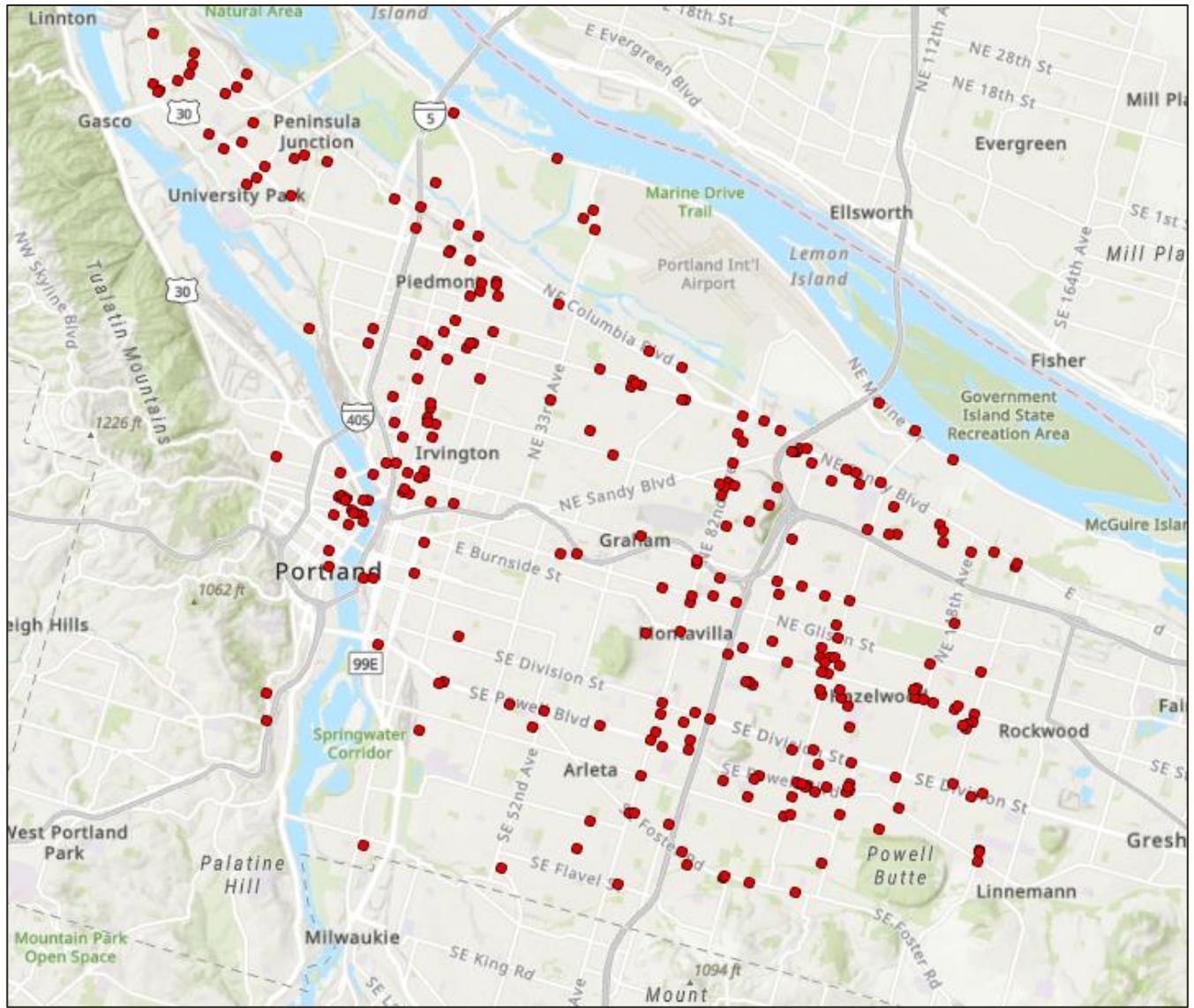
Portland Homicides: January 2019 – June 2021



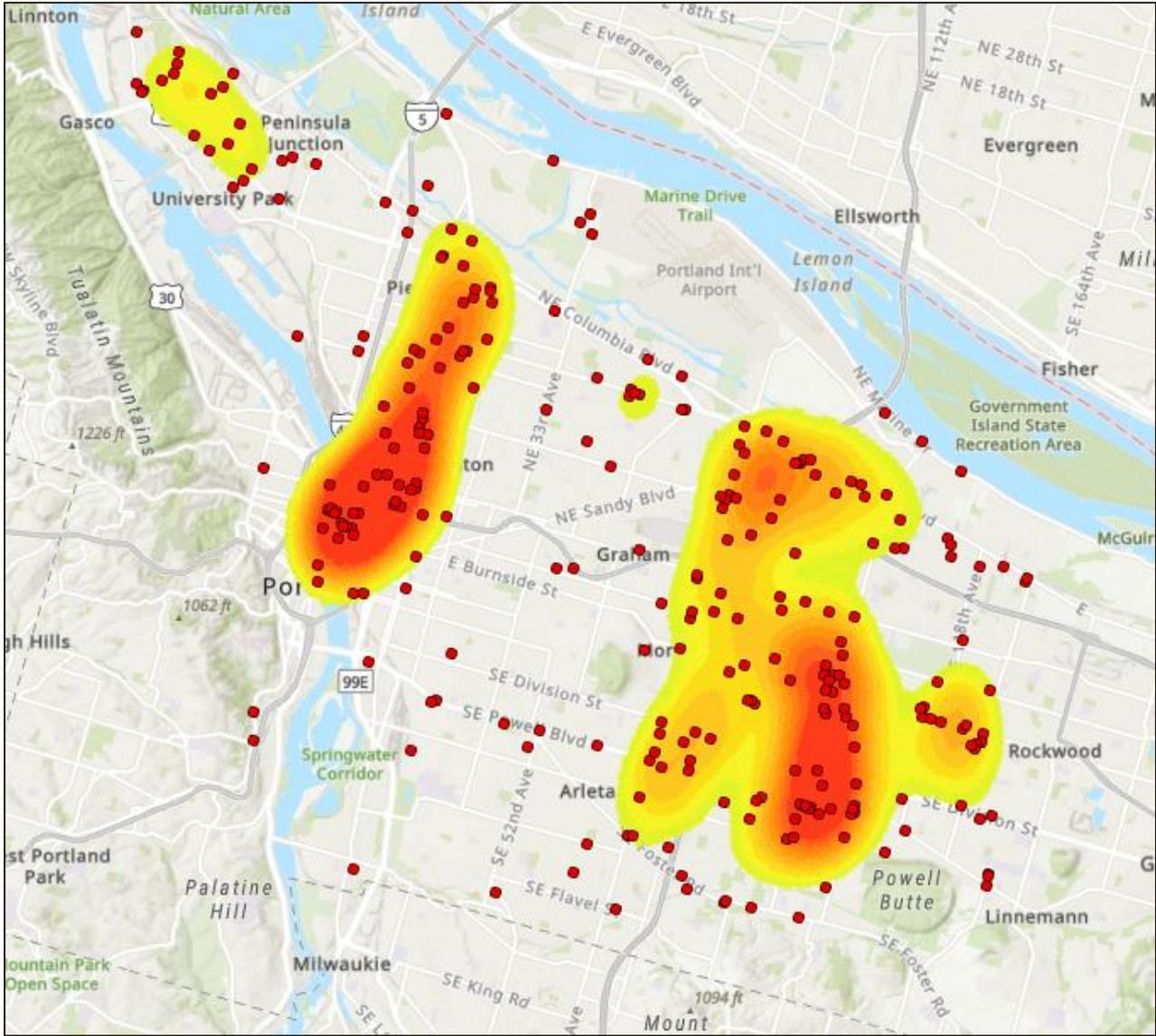
Portland Homicide Density: January 2019 – June 2021



Portland Nonfatal Shootings: January 2019 – June 2021



Portland Nonfatal Shootings: January 2019 – June 2021



Discussion of Findings and Recommendations

Key Findings

- **Since the last analysis Portland's homicide and shooting rate has risen dramatically.**
 - This sharp increase is the largest amongst its peer cities– a 207% increase in homicide rate from 2019-2021.
- **Homicides were significantly more likely to be gun homicides (75%) from 2019-2021 when compared to homicides from 2015-2019 (60%).**
- **During this spike the dynamics of homicides and shootings and demographics of those involved did not change significantly:**
 - Mainly Caucasian and African-American males, with an average age of 33, and more than half involved in gangs/groups.
- **Less than 6% of victims and suspects in shootings and homicides are under the age of 18.**
 - The majority of victims and suspects are between the age of 18-34, with 25-34 being the largest age group.
- **Portland's gun homicides are mostly group member involved (52%), and 46% of shootings are also group member involved.**
 - This is likely a conservative estimate: group member involvement was unknown for 33% of gun homicides and 46% of nonfatal shootings.

Key Findings (2)

- **Because of the inability to review a significant proportion of homicide and shooting cases, conclusions about incident motives are unclear.**
- **Victims and suspects have extensive prior criminal justice system involvement:**
 - About 70% of victims and suspects had been arrested before their involvement in the homicide or nonfatal shooting. Of those:
 - 58% had prior felony convictions
 - Victims had committed an average of 9 prior criminal offenses
 - Suspects had committed an average of 7 prior criminal offenses
- **Disproportionate Impact:** African-American males continue to be the most disproportionately impacted by shootings and homicides.
 - While African-Americans comprise only 5.9% of Portland's population, 47% of victims and suspects of homicides and shootings were African-American.
 - While 37% of victims and suspects were Caucasian, and they are 75% of Portland's population.

Recommendations

- **Central Recommendation:** Develop a violence intervention strategy that focuses on the majority of the shootings and homicides. In Portland the majority of the shootings and homicides are gang/group member involved
- Focus on the individuals that are at the very highest risk of being involved in shootings and homicides as victims and suspects. In Portland these are the characteristics of those at very highest risk:
 - African-American males age 18-34
 - Caucasian males age 18-34
 - Well known to the criminal justice system, especially those with felonies
 - Prior or current probation/post prison supervision
 - Involved in an active high-risk network/group
 - Has been previously shot or socially connected to a recent shooting or homicide victim

Recommendations (2)

- **When implementing strategies to reduce gun violence utilize available data to focus on the largest known driver of gun violence.**
- **Utilize evidence-based practices and plan data collection procedures that facilitate ongoing assessment and strategic adjustments.**
- **If the goal of public safety strategies is to reduce gun violence in the near term, invest in and focus on the people that are at highest risk now.**
- **Obtain technical assistance from research partners to assist with design and implementation.**
- **Work with probation/parole on risk assessments for those most likely to be involved in gun violence.**

Acknowledgements

CALIFORNIA PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES

The CPSC and Dr. Lisa Barao would like to thank the Office of Mayor Ted Wheeler, Assistant Chief Jami Resch, Lt. David Michaelson, the Enhanced Community Safety Team (ECST), PPB Detectives Division and Strategic Services Division for their assistance in obtaining the data needed to complete this report.

www.thecapartnership.org

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